

DATA LINK

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 5

NOVEMBER, 1987

The official newsletter of the Modesto Atari Computer Club

WE WILL BE MEETING BACK IN THE SAME MAIN FLOOR ROOM AGAIN THIS MONTH

WANTED: VOLUNTEERS TO BE CLUB OFFICERS

ELECTIONS TO BE HELD AT THIS MONTH'S MEETING

**IF YOU ARE NOT THERE TO VOTE
YOU MIGHT BECOME OUR NEXT
PRESIDENT!**

**WE REALLY NEED YOUR INPUT
SEE YOU AT THE MEETING**

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The open house last month was somewhat of a success. We had visitors in and out all day. The public domain libraries moved quite well, as well as the question and answer sessions at the individual booths. We had three new members join at the event, and have several people that expressed wishes to join and said that they will be attending the next meeting. For those of you that didn't make it there, you missed seeing the new ATARI XE GAME MACHINE in action. Thomas Sitton was good enough to bring his 3 day old system out and let everyone take a turn with it. It was very complete, as far as what I would want in a game system. Look out Nintendo!

Mike Curry, the programmer who wrote the software for Navarone's scanner, stopped by and left his scanner for us to demo. Lloyd Nicholas had a lot of fun with it scanning every thing that he could get his hands on. He is editing these pictures into a massive group of clip art selections for the ST.

Rick Paderes and Bernard Tom had MIDI music going in one corner of the room, and George Siegfried was set up showing everyone the in-s and out-s of VIP PROFESSIONAL. John Extrachter created a demo using the Ray-Trace Construction Set from Start Magazine. All in all we had a fun day.

This month is elections and your chance to take part in the leadership of the club. All offices are open and ready for your participation. We are also voting on the amendment of the BY-LAWS OF the MODESTO ATARI COMPUTER CLUB. The change will involve ARTICLE III. OFFICERS AND DUTIES, Section 3. that reads "Officers of the organization shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian.". We propose a change that will create two new positions in the board. This change will read "Section 3. Officers of the organization shall be President, Vice President,

Secretary, Treasurer, News Lett Editor, 8 bit Librarian, and ST Librarian.". This will be voted on first, and then the general election for officers. Depending on how this vote goes determines what we will be voting on when voting for officers.

I want to thank you for attending last month's meeting. We were able to get some good information on where attention is needed within the club. There was a show of need for smaller group discussions away from the open meeting format. Also there is a great deal of need for special interest groups for both computer systems.

That's about it for now, hope to see you at the next meeting. Remember the club needs your participation.

--Robert Johnstone, M.A.C.C. President



Seeing YOU at our next meeting will
bring smiles to everyone's faces!

Drop on by the meeting Wednesday and cast your vote—or better yet, run for an office. The club needs your participation and support. . See you there!

(REMEMBER-We will be meeting back in
the DOWNSTAIRS room AGAIN)

ST LIBRARY DISKS



Disk 57: TINY PICTURES w/ DSLIDE
 Disk 58: ST XFORMER 8-BIT EMULATOR

DISK #57

By popular demand this is another collection of color pictures in TINY format including some original works by MACC's own Anne Butler. These are color pictures but they can be viewed on monochrome monitors with the included program DELUXE SLIDESHOW v1.1 (disk 45). This picture viewer supports NEOCHROME (.NEO), TINY(.TNY/.TN1-3), DEGAS(.PI1-3), DEGAS ELITE (.PC1-3), full color animation (all four DEGASchannels), automatic resolution switching (all resolutions), optional script files, optional titles, and command line input with wildcards. Includes an 8K doc.

DISK #58

ST XFORMER v1.11 is the latest and greatest Atari 800 emulator from Darek Mihocka. This is the distribution included in the current ST LOG. It includes heavily commented Megamax source code. The distribution of this source code was one of the provisos imposed upon Darek by ATARI CORP before they would allow him to use their OS. Also included is an Analog arcade game, a Newell Fastchip floating point emulator, and a monochrome version of the emulator (not included in ST LOG) that Darek has just recently made available. For documentation you have to buy the magazine.

-Robert Forster, 16-bit Librarian

During the past year our ST library has grown from 11 to 58 disks to include a broad selection of the best public domain software and shareware available. With this month's disks the torch of the ST library passes to a new librarian (to be ordained at the next

meeting). The qualifications for this job are a willingness to bring the library disks to monthly meetings, and wield the awesome power of a voting member of the MACC board of directors. It is not necessary that you be a software expert, or that you have a modem, or even that you have a magic fountain which flows with unlimited supplies of software. If you think you might like to be ST librarian for a year, be sure to come to the November meeting. If you have any questions before the next meeting, feel free to call me at 847-0623.

--Robert Forster, 16-Bit Librarian



YOU could be the new NEWSLETTER EDITOR
 Share your creativity with us--
 We need YOU to fill this office

(call me at 522-1429 for info)

-Roger-

ATARI NEWS ROUNDUP

Reprinted from ST-Report #10, Oct. 24, 1987
(c) 1987 Rovac Industries
Publisher/Editor: Ron Kovacs

The new hardware item now shipping from Atari is the "crown jewel" in the product line, the Mega. The first production units were finally shipped out recently and the blitter WAS included. Atari is now off on a "Mega rollout tour" as they seek to introduce the new machines to "professional" dealers throughout the country. Atari has also lined up a number of "professional" software publishers, such as WordPerfect, which will be debuting the ST version of WordPerfect on the tour, to accompany them. Yes, "professional" seems to be the operative word here, as the Mega will have "professional" dealers, "professional" software, and a "professional" price! The retail price for a Mega 2 is \$1699 for a mono system and \$1899 for color. The Mega 4 goes for \$2399 mono and \$2599 color. Add this to stringent Mega dealer qualifications and a STRICT no mail order policy, and it becomes evident that discounts on these prices will be very hard to come by, at least for now. This may account for the recent surge in sales of the 520ST and 1040ST, as people who were patiently waiting for the Megs to arrive got wind of the new prices and decided that "Power without the Price" was better than "Power WITH the Price". In any case, other "professional" features of the Mega include a detachable keyboard with much improved feel, an internal expansion socket, a 68000 bus extender socket (for external expansion), a battery-backed internal clock, new ROMs, an internal DMA port and power supply tap, and, of course, the long-awaited blitter chip.

OTHER ATARI HARDWARE STILL AMONG THE MISSING:

All is not peaches and cream with Atari's promised hardware, however. A number of new products have still not made their appearance and Atari is not being very helpful in providing information about them. First and foremost is the Atari Laser Printer, which was supposed to be out BEFORE the

Megas. Atari claims that the printer is working fine, but the INTERFACE that allows the printer to pass along the ST DMA bus is still having problems. They say it should be ready to ship "any day now". Of course, by the time it is ready a \$1500 laser printer with no on-board RAM and limited to use with one brand of computer might not seem to be as much of a bargain as it seemed back in January.

Cold on the heels of the Laser Printer is the Atari PC. Still missing after months of on-again, off-again announcements from Atari, the Atari PC, like the Laser Printer, might not be much of a bargain by the time it makes its appearance. After almost being killed by a doubting Sam Tramiel, the PC is apparently on again, but Atari does not seem to be very enthusiastic about it. A \$700 PC clone with a monochrome monitor and no slots doesn't seem like such a great deal when a local electronics store here in Brooklyn is selling Blue Chip PC clones for \$438 complete with mono monitor and six slots.

Finally, for 8-bit fans, is the XF551 disk drive. This double-sided double density replacement for the rapidly vanishing 1050 has finally completed development, according to Atari, but no release date has been announced for it. Atari had better get moving on it because there will soon be a horde of new XE Super Game System owners looking for the disk drives promised on their game packages.

NON-ATARI HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

Magic Sac users now have hard disk support and compatibility with more than 90% of present Macintosh software thanks to version 4.52 of the Magic Sac boot software, now shipping from Data Pacific. Present Sac owners can get the new software, along with a completely re-written manual, by sending their original Atari boot disk, along with \$20, to Data Pacific. Ver. 4.52 is also now shipping with all new Magic Sac cartridges. The long-awaited Translator ONE, which will allow STs using the Magic Sac to read original Mac disks, was supposed to begin shipping on October 1, however a shipment of mislabeled chips from "Raving Idiot Computer Chips" began

crashing Translator mother boards being assembled and played havoc with Data Pacific's shipping schedule. David Small is picking up the pieces (and preparing his lawsuit), so expect delivery to be delayed a couple of weeks or so.

Electronic Arts has finally admitted that the ST market does exist and has just released a number of their programs, including Music Construction Set (not Deluxe), The Bard's Tale, and the long-promised Marble Madness, to try to make a few bucks off of it. I wonder if Trip included any "buy an Amiga" messages with the new programs?

Another long-time Atari nay-sayer, Epyx, has also released some new ST programs, including Boulder Dash Construction Set.

ICD Inc., makers of the P:R:Connection the MIO board, the US Doubler and SpartaDOS, among others for the Atari 8-bit line, has just introduced their first ST product. The ICD SCSI Host Adaptor retails for \$134.95 and allows use of standard SCSI controllers and hard disks with the ST. There are a number of other products on the market that do the same thing (from Berkeley Micro Systems and Supra) for about the same price, but the ICD is the only one that has a second DMA port to allow another DMA device to share the DMA bus. This means that an Atari, Supra, or Astra hard drive could be used at the same time as an ICD setup. Packaged with the Host Adaptor is a disk of ICD hard disk utilities that allow, among other more usual functions, a hard disk to be formatted to give about 10% more storage space than it would if it were formatted using conventional software (approximately 2 extra megs on a 20 meg hard drive). ICD also announced that they will be selling a complete hard disk assembly using their host adaptor. It will be housed in a low-profile case that can also serve as a monitor stand, and it will contain either one or two hard drive mechanisms of 20, 30, 40 or more megs, depending on the configuration ordered, and it, like the host adaptor, will have a second DMA connector to continue the DMA bus. It will also have a SCSI port to allow up to 7 additional SCSI devices to be controlled by the host adaptor. This will allow flexible and relatively

inexpensive expansion of hard disk storage (great for BBSs!). Final prices were not announced, although ICD said that they expect a single 20 meg system to be comparable in price to the Atari and Supra 20 meg units.

Speaking of hard disk utilities, Beckemeyer Development has released a package called the Beckemeyer Hard Disk Tool Kit which features an excellent hard disk backup program.

Finally, Future Systems Inc., current makers of the Indus GT disk drives for the 8-bit computers, has just released the GTS-100, a double-sided 3.5" floppy drive for the ST.

Except for the usual avalanche of games and such for the ST, and the renewed interest in the 8-bit computers (a.k.a. the XE SGS), that's it for now.

LATE BREAKING FLASH! Word from Neil Harris on GENie is that the IBM hardware emulator box, which had been "on the back burner" while Atari fiddled with the PC, is now apparently back under full development at Atari. My guess is that Atari discovered that they could sell the Megas to the business market much more effectively if they featured MS-DOS compatibility (in fast hardware rather than slow software), much like the Mac SE/II and the Amiga 2000. Of course, no price or release date was mentioned.

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COMDEX REPORT



PRESS RELEASE: OVERVIEW OF COMDEX
1987 ATARI BOOTH

First uploaded to GENIE 11/2/87

CONNECTIVITY, SOLUTIONS, AND TECHNOLOGY: ATARI ANNOUNCES NEW PRODUCTS AT COMDEX

(Las Vegas, NV -- Comdex Fall 87)..

In a series of major product introductions, Atari Corporation emerges as a maker of a complete line of high-performance, low-cost solutions for the business world. New technology is showcased by Abaq, an ultra-high-performance workstation with blazing speed and dazzling graphics. The Abaq, based on a sophisticated "transputer" chip, runs more than 10 times faster than a PC/AT technology and more than 5 times faster than the 68020 with math processor. The parallel processing capability of Abaq lets a single system multiply its processing power by adding extra transputer chips.

Atari unveiled its new CD player capable of reading CD-ROM disks and of playing musical CD disks. The CD-ROM is supported by a Mega and ST-compatible DMA interface, and will retail in early 1988 for under \$600.

Atari's connectivity answer is a LAN which is compatible with the NETBIOS standard used by IBM and Novell. It communicates data at 1

megabits-per-second to PC's and over 250K bits-per-second over Appletalk. Atari is planning to manufacture "PromiseLAN" adapters for the Mega, ST, and PC computer lines.

The Atari Mega computers are showcased with a variety of solid business solutions. Desktop publishing is represented by both the Atari SLM804 Laser Printer and by G.O. Graphics, who are porting their Deskset program (CompuGraphics compatible) which Atari will market. WordPerfect is displaying the recently shipped Word Perfect ST, and Atari is displaying Microsoft Write. A group of vendors are appealing to VARs with vertical packages running under the IDRIS multi-user, multi-tasking operating system. Several new high-end CAD packages are on display including Foresight's Drafix 1.

Atari expanded its PC-compatible offerings by adding two new models: the PC2 (PC XT compatible) and PC4 (PC AT compatible), both with EGA graphics, high clock speeds, and low price tags. A variation of the PC3 will operate in VGA graphics mode as well. The PC2 and PC4 will be offered with 3.5" or 5.25" floppy disks and with hard disks. These new models join the PC1, which at \$799 is a basic 512K PC XT compatible, suitable for use as a LAN workstation and for standalone personal computing. The PC2 includes XT-compatible slots, while the PC4's slots are PC AT compatible.

"We offer complete systems for the office," said Atari president Sam Tramiel. "I can see Atari Mega computers with laser printers as desktop publishing stations exchanging data with a satellite group of PC1's as LAN stations. An entire office environment can be created. The PC, the Macintosh, and the Atari computer co-exist. Each can do the things they do best."

PHANTASIE III

Reviewed by Mike Marcellin, M.A.C.C.

Being a long time D & D enthusiast, one of the first games purchased for our computer was naturally going to be a role-playing game. I selected Phantasie III based on some reviews of earlier SSI releases, sent off an order and nervously chewed my fingernails while I waited for the game to arrive. I was hoping for a game that would take advantage of the features that attracted me to the ST (speed, graphics and GEM interface), but very much afraid that what I would get would be an eight-bit game ported to a sixteen-bit machine. I had this experience with King's Quest, a fine game but one that looks and plays like an eight-bit game. Happily, this is not the case with Phantasie III. This game has a full GEM interface. The entire game can be played using the mouse or the keyboard (whichever you prefer, whenever you prefer). Screen updates for movement, status and combat are fast and require minimal disk access. In fact, except for entering and leaving towns or dungeons, there is no disk access during game play. Game graphics are detailed and well done. The game is almost as much fun to watch as it is to play. There is sufficient variety in the Monster graphics so that most can be identified on sight. Where duplication exists, a quick look at the Monster Names Option resolves that question (High Devils! Feet don't fail me now!). Game play is very good. There are enough types of potions, spells, weapons, etc. to satisfy any fantasy-gamer. Dungeon mapping is done by the computer and includes the option of saving the map when exiting the dungeon. There are extensive combat options and combat is resolved in one of three different speeds. A variety of different screens keep one posted on party status, with varying degrees of detail.

Now for the negatives! In some instances, Options windows obscure important information (Was I going to Heal the Monk or the Wizard? I can't see the Status screen!). Starting the game from scratch is a time consuming and frustrating experience. I spent 4 to 5 hours playing before my party of adventurers could travel about without half of them getting killed by the weakest of monsters. Undoubtedly this could be avoided if one transferred characters from Phantasie I or II. All in all, both my wife and I found Phantasie III to be very addicting and great fun.

The July/August ST-Log reported that SSI has acquired the computer rights to D & D from TSR, so I'm looking forward to some more great games in this genre. The fact that SSI went to the trouble and expense of rewriting this game for ST's will definitely keep me coming back to them for more!

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Editor's note: Thanks, Mike, for sharing your experiences with us. It's really appreciated!!



Could this be a game YOU might ENJOY?

The First XLEnt Word Processor by XLEnt Software

a Review by Greg Pearce, Duncan Atari Area Users Club, Duncan, OK by way of Michigan Atari General Information Conference

This is the first word processor that XLEnt Software has put out, as the name suggests. It is a cheap (around \$20) 40 column (40, not 38) word processor. For those contemplating the purchase of a word processor, this is a quick review. I am not going to be able to list all the features (too many!) but I will touch on the highlights.

This is an icon/keyboard driven word processor. Which means you can use a joystick or the keyboard to get to six basic functions. Using a joystick to move around the screen and access the printer, disk drive, etc., is somewhat of a novelty, but I still think the keyboard is quicker and easier. There are many features that all word processors have and some that you wish all would have. These are the ones I will try to highlight.

There are two different programs on the disk-one for the 400/800 and one for the XL/XE. I have an XE, so many of the features I'll be mentioning will be on that program.

First, for all those with XL/XE computers who have wondered at that funny, if not useless, key marked 'HELP', here is a program that makes good use of it. For the XE there are four HELP windows. They describe all the format, printer, and special character functions and keys very well. For example, while typing a letter you may want to do a certain function but cannot remember the keys. In the old word processors this would be the time to hunt down the owner's manual. But with this one, just push 'HELP' and window 1 and you have before you a list of the keys and their functions. Much faster.

Pushing the 'SELECT' key brings up the special keys for the printer driver which is built in and is EASY to program to your printer. With this driver you can also program in all the codes for special characters.

For the XE computers there is a nice bonus. A second window. You can load in two separate documents and edit each separately or move portions or all of the one to the other, as long as the programs are within the reaches of your memory (ie., not too long). This is very useful when you want to move large sections from one document to another. All the edit functions, help windows, and printer functions will work in both windows.

Also for the XE there is a printer spooler. This allows you to send a document to the printer and then while it is doing its business you can be typing or editing another letter. This single feature sold me more than all the others. As it uses the computer's memory to store and send the data to the printer it does slow down everything quite a bit, but for the joy of not being shackled to your printer, this can be tolerated. To test the system, I ran a little experiment. I loaded two large documents into each of the windows, put a large paragraph into the cut/paste buffer, looked at a Help screen and accessed the disk drive while the printer spooler was printing five copies of window 1. (!) It did very well, if slowly, until I accessed the disk drive. Then it printed some odd characters which had nothing to do with the letter it was printing. My conclusion regarding the spooler is, you can overload its capacity, especially if you use the disk drive a lot. But for an 8-bit computer it did very well and under normal operating conditions, it will handle very well. I have been happy with it.

Some of the features I don't have time to explain are: 1 - a very complete text formatter (commands to the printer which are imbedded in the text). This includes the ability to chain

files and actually INSERT PICTURES into your text on the printer! 2 - it has a very good 80 column print preview. 3 - it will print double columns on most printers. 4 - it can be integrated with other programs such as BGRAPH for graphs, KOALA PAD and TYPESETTER for pictures, SYNFILE, -CALC and others for mail merging. And, 5 - many useful functions for formatting while typing - the ability to turn the word wrap on and off - find out how many words are in the document - how many sectors it will take to save the document...on and on, too numerous to list.

My conclusion is, after having used The First XLEnt Word Processor next to my other word processors, this is a preferred program. Now it is the one I use the most and I would have no qualms recommending it to others as a good word processor to invest in.

FIRST XLENT WORD PROCESSOR DISK UPDATE

By Wally Wong, BRACE

The folks at XLEnt Software are now shipping the upgrade to their excellent and inexpensive First XLEnt Word Processor. Version 2.1 will make present owners happy and may excite those holding out.

Some of the modifications, as mentioned by Linda of XLEnt Software, will include the ability to save system configurations - you no longer have to adjust colors and make personal adjustments everytime you boot the system, dumping the cut/paste buffer directly to the printer and the ability to search and replace the return character - pay attention telecomm. people.

To obtain your upgrade, just send the yellow "upgrade" card you should have received with the manual. Lost the card? No sweat. Just send either the master disk with \$3.00 or \$5.00 without the master disk, but list the serial number of the master disk in your response. Don't forget to include your return address and other necessary information when requesting your upgrade. !!

SPARTADOS HELP

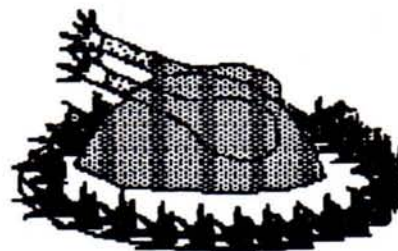
by Gerald Cox

How many times have you wished you could call a binary file AUTORUN.SYS and have SpartaDOS load it automatically for you, but the program will not run with the keyboard buffer installed? Until now, the only way was to use a STARTUP.BAT file to do a key-off then load the program.

Well, I got tired of it and discovered that you can search the X32D.DOS file for three bytes and change them, and the default on boot-up will be the keyboard buffer off. Just get out the SpartaDOS Tool Kit and load the Diskrx sector editor. Search for these three bytes: 20 DB FF. Change them to EA EA EA. That's all there is to it. I also changed the ver. number to X32K.DOS so I would know that it was the one with the default Keyboard Buffer off. I think this makes a great DOS even better.

If you don't have Diskrx, then format a disk with AINIT. Copy X32D.DOS to it. Load up whatever sector editor you have, and go to sector 106. Now change the bytes 20 DB FF to EA EA EA.

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HAVE A HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

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EXCHANGE

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Items for print in the newsletter must be submitted 14 days before the next meeting
 (handwritten copy okay if legible)

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Our next Meeting:
November 11, 1987
 (Wednesday) 7:00 pm

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